

25

Scariest movie moments

"Do you like scary movies?" Of course you do – that's why you're here. So duck behind the sofa and break out the brown trousers as *Empire* takes you on a tour of horror's most terrifying movie moments. Be afraid, be very afraid.

BEWARE ALSO: SPOILERS!



25. Red dwarf
Don't Look Now (1973)

Horrormeisters: Donald Sutherland, Adelina Poerio

A small child cries in a Venice sidestreet. Could it be the reincarnation of architect John Baxter's (Sutherland) late daughter? Of course not, silly – it's a psychotic, knife-wielding female dwarf in a red raincoat! As said small person proceeds to rip into Sutherland's throat, it's easy to understand why this scene has been ripped off by everything from *Flatliners* to *Gremlins 2 The New Batch*. And to appreciate the sequence's enduring power, just check out *The League Of Gentlemen's* recent, utterly terrifying homage.



24. Damien's playtime
The Omen (1976)

Horrormeisters: Lee Remick, Harvey Stephens

It's hard to believe that such a cute kid could intentionally harm anyone. Sure he's got that 666 birthmark and wears creepy little tailored suits, but really... Just cos you're born the son of Satan doesn't mean you're automatically evil right? Try raising that argument two-thirds of the way into the movie when Damien in his pedal car "accidentally" knocks his mother off a hair and over a second-floor railing. The look of cold nonchalance in his black, beady eyes as he stares at her limp body will chill you to the bone.



23. "Hey... you wanna see something really scary?"
Twilight Zone: The Movie (1983)

Horrormeisters: Albert Brooks, Dan Aykroyd

There are plenty of things wrong with this Spielberg-produced anthology film but the prologue isn't one of them. Indeed, the sight of Albert Brooks and Dan Aykroyd bowling down a dark country road talking about their favourite episodes of *The Twilight Zone* is the nearest the movie comes to catching the spirit of the TV show. And the superb EC Comics-style reveal at the end of the scene, with Aykroyd transforming into a hideous demon, wouldn't look out of place in the very best episodes of Rod Serling's cult TV series.

22. TV peekaboo

The Ring (2003)

Horrormeisters: Martin Henderson, Daveigh Chase

Up until this point, *The Ring* is a creepy, unsettling but not particularly horrific film. But when Samara drags her dripping-wet young body out of the television set, the ante is well and truly upped. Her spider-like crawl, the rotting flesh and that freakish matted black mane – it all adds up to a month's worth of nightmares.



21. Baby face

Rosemary's Baby (1968)

Horrormeister: Mia Farrow

Having spent the whole of Roman Polanski's horror classic convinced that she's carrying the spawn of the Devil, neurotic Rosemary Woodhouse (Farrow) finds out that her paranoia wasn't misplaced in the final scene when she's invited to look upon her child for the first time. That we don't get to see Satan's sprog makes only heightens the terror.

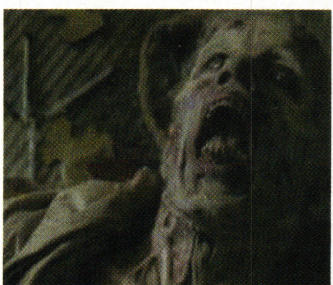


20. Rise and poo yourself

Se7en (1995)

Horrormeisters: Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Michael Reid Mackay

Two cops inspect a tortured, emaciated corpse (killed for the sin of Sloth), when he suddenly comes to life, screaming bloody murder. Essentially, this is just a very nasty version of someone playing dead and shouting "Boo!", but it's scary as hell.



19. Tense, nervous headache

Scanners (1981)

Horrormeister: Michael Ironside

Talk about your movie money shots. David Cronenberg coughed up the splattery goods early in this story about good "scanners" trying to stop their bad telekinetic brethren from using their freaky mindpowers to take over the world. *Scanners* is one of the Canadian horror director's lesser films but it contains his most memorable and jaw-dropping cinematic moment. Michael Ironside, bad scanner, demonstrates his power on a man by making the poor dude's head explode! In full colour! Yum!

18. Poolside pussy

Cat People (1942)

Horrormeisters: Jane Randolph, Simone Simon

Could that really be a ferocious black panther stalking around the swimming pool occupied by the terrified, sopping-wet Alice Moore (Randolph)? Because of director Jacques Tourneur's ingenious use of shadow and sound and his firm commitment to less-is-more filmmaking, we never know for certain. However, there's no doubt about the very real terror this sequence whips up. The same smoke-and-mirrors tricks worked very well in Paul Schrader's criminally underrated remake, too.



17. And they all lived unhappily ever after, part 1

Invasion Of The Bodysnatchers (1978)

Horrormeisters: Donald Sutherland, Nancy Cartwright

It might not eclipse Don Siegel's sci-fi/horror classic but Philip Kaufman's remake does have the edge when it comes to finales. While the original ends on a relatively up-beat note, Kaufman's picture concludes with the last-shot revelation that Donald Sutherland's hero has become a pod person. And not content with simultaneously crushing our spirits and scaring the bejeesus out of us, Kaufman robs us of any relief by rolling the credits over complete silence. In short, an ending so bleak and terrifying, you'll be sleeping with the lights on for months.



16. If you go down to the woods today...

An American Werewolf In London (1981)

Horrormeisters: David Naughton, Jenny Agutter

Movie dream sequences usually consist of a dwarf talking backwards or of a close friend's aunt turning into an Alsatian. This is not the case in John Landis's excellent horror comedy during which lycanthrope victim David Kessler (Naughton) has nightmares about hunting deer in the nude and his family is being murdered by Nazi mutants. More disturbing still is a fantasy in which Kessler spies himself in a forest clearing in a hospital bed being attended to by the very comely Nurse Alex (Agutter). Cue flashback to Kessler with vampiric teeth and yellow contacts. Sounds pretty anodyne but trust us – this will chill you to the marrow even more than the split second where Bilbo went Orc in *The Fellowship Of The Ring*.

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15. Spitting the dummy
Dead Of Night (1945)

Horrormeister: Michael Redgrave

Arguably the finest ever anthology movie, this good old-fashioned 'orror picture also features one of the very best frights in film history. Ventriloquist Maxwell Frere (Redgrave) is convinced that he is possessed by his dummy. This being the case, it is little wonder that Max goes completely apeshit when said dummy slowly rises to its feet under its own steam. Much mimicked (most notably by Richard Attenborough's disappointing *Magic*), but never bettered, it's a moment that'll make it impossible for you to enjoy David Strassman ever again.

14. Flame-grilled copper
The Wicker Man (1973)

Horrormeisters: Edward Woodward, Christopher Lee, Mary Ure, Ingrid Pitt, Ian Campbell, a plethora of pagans
In most horror movies, the moments of terror take place in the dead of night. In Robin Hardy's pagan oddity, the shocking climax occurs during a pleasant, sunny spring afternoon. As police officer Howie (Woodward) is marched towards the titular effigy, it's obvious that he hasn't been asked round for a barbecue. And if things weren't horrific enough already, the Christian cop starts to blaspheme as his reckoning draws close, suggesting that once his suffering is over, he'll be denied his place in Paradise.



13. The hobbling
Misery (1990)

Horrormeisters: Kathy Bates, James Caan
Nobody wants to be an invalid, helpless and at the mercy of a stranger, but that fear is only amplified when your "nurse" is Annie Wilkes, bitter, twisted psychopath and rabid book-lover. When she places a chunk of wood between crippled horror scribe Paul Sheldon's (James Caan) ankles, with the intention of smashing his ankles with a sledgehammer, the look of horror and resignation on Caan's face is sickening - but it has nothing on the sound of the hammer coming down on his ankles.



12. "One of us, one of us..."
Freaks (1932)

Horrormeister: Olga Baclanova

There has never been another film like *Freaks*. There never will be. Tod Browning's scary but sympathetic look at the world of circus freaks featured real pin-heads, midgets, strongmen, human snakes, hermaphrodites, etc. The story follows an evil but spunky trapeze artist (Olga Baclanova) who romances a midget for his money but plans with her strongman lover to off the little man. When the freaks discover that this "normal" couple have black hearts, they dismember Olga and turn her into one of them, one of them...



10. On mouldy pond
Friday The 13th (1980)

Horrormeisters: Adrienne King, Ari Lehman

After being chased around Camp Crystal Lake for two days by a murderous psycho, having all of her friends brutally slain, and generally going through hell, Alice Hardy deserves a little quiet time. As she drifts on the camp's lake in a rowboat, the sun creeping up on the misty horizon, we expect to see the credits roll. Which is why it's pants-wetting time when a young Jason Voorhees leaps from the water, sans hockey mask, and pulls Alice into the water. So popular was this short scene that it helped spawn countless sequels.



11. Heads up
The Exorcist (1973)

Horrormeister: Linda Blair

William Friedkin's demonic possession classic was packed with frightening moments when first released. Subliminal flashes of a demonic face would etch themselves in memory permanently. A telephone ringing in the foreground will jolt you out of your seat. The recently restored version added more, such as Regan's freaky "spiderwalk" down the stairs. But it's the moment where Regan's head turns all the way around that does our heads in. It's a physical impossibility, unless you're dead, which she's not. What happens next signifies that we're going even deeper into new terror-tory.

9. Clowning around *Poltergeist* (1982)

Horrormeister: Oliver Robins

A toy has never provoked so much fear or led to so many sleepless nights. Young Robbie Freeling, a sensitive kid, lives in that most haunted of houses. He's freaked by the malevolent-looking clown toy that sits on a chair in his room. Robbie glances away as lightning flashes outside his window. He looks back and the clown is gone. Shudder. He looks under the bed. Not there. He sits up. The fucking thing's behind him! Its long arms wrap around his neck and it drags him under the bed. Actor Oliver Robins nearly died during the filming of this scene. The clown arms were actually choking him and Steven Spielberg didn't realise until his child star turned blue. Spielberg saved Robins. Nothing however could save the actresses who played his sisters, both of whom died early and in tragic circumstances.



7. Dead reckoning *Halloween* (1978)

Horrormeisters: Donald Pleasence, Jamie Lee Curtis, Nick Castle

This low-budget psycho thriller was the break-out hit that inspired countless and inevitably inferior "slasher" flicks. Within a year, *Friday The 13th* was in cinemas. Then came *Happy Birthday To Me*, *New Year's Evil*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Prom Night*, *Sleepaway Camp*, *Sorority House Massacre*, *When A Stranger Calls*, *Maniac*, *The Burning*, *April Fool's Day*, *The Prowler*, *Tourist Trap* and *Silent Night, Deadly Night*, to name but a few. But despite the calendar being plundered for titles and directors, replicating *Halloween's* rules (childhood trauma breeds psychos who kill sluts easily but are thwarted by virgins) none of these efforts came close to John Carpenter's film for Hitchcockian virtuosity and sheer terror. Prowling "Killercam" and the patient, implacable evil of The Shape as he offed Laurie Strode's friends, made for a movie best watched from under the cinema seat. And just when you thought it was over - Dr Sam Loomis pumps six bullets into The Shape and he falls off a first-floor balcony onto a suburban lawn - the terror starts again. Loomis looks and he's gone. Carpenter's spine-tingling music starts up again. We nearly have a heart attack.



8. They all lived unhappily ever after, part 2 *Carrie* (1976)

Horrormeister: Sissy Spacek

Carrie is just a high school chick who wants to fit in. She's a freckly nerd who has a religious freak mum. Carrie doesn't know much about getting her period but she knows she has a crush on school hunk John Travolta. Oh, and she has the power to move objects with her mind. So, when nasty school-mates dump pig's blood all over Carrie during her crowning moment at the school prom, she loses her mind but lets her mindpowers loose. She brings down the house, killing her tormentors, and then goes home to make the cutlery drawer fly into Mum. A fire then snuffs out Carrie's light. Her surviving nerd friend visits Carrie's grave at the film's end and, well, it gives new meaning to "reach out and touch someone".

THEY'RE NOT HORROR BUT THEY SCARE!



... *The Wizard Of Oz* - the descent of those flying monkey bastards, the wicked witches.

... *The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring* - when Bilbo suddenly turns into an Orc, showing just what the precious can do.

... *Showgirls* - Elizabeth Berkley and Kyle MacLachlan get busy in the swimming pool.

... *Two Hands* - the young thief gets collected by a speeding car. You will believe a boy can thud.

... *In The Bedroom* - good son Nick Stahl gets blown away, as do our expectations.

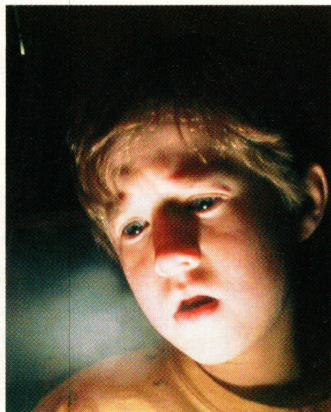
... *Sybil* - a series of flashbacks throughout the film showing horrific abuse at the hands of her disturbed mother, including the notorious "buttonhook".

... *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* - the childcatcher steals kiddies away, which terrifies the littlies this flick is aimed at. Even more terrifying when you grow up and realise the implications.

... *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* - on the river cruise, as Gene Wilder maniacally recites verse, a series of flash edits depict all sorts of ghoulishness, filling up the Huggies of any small children watching.

... *Blue Velvet* - Dennis Hopper's gas-sucking madness. Speaking of David Lynch, anything between FADE IN and FADE OUT in *Eraserhead* probably qualifies as scary, while the hobo mutant from *Mulholland Drive* made us jump, too.

... *Fatal Attraction* - Glenn Close's bunny boiling, her jump out of the bath, and her poodle perm!
EDWIN PETERS



6. "I'm sick."
The Sixth Sense (1999)

Horrormeister: Haley Joel Osment
Young Cole Sear is afflicted with a terrible curse - he sees dead people. Given that this would be hard enough for a grown man to bear, his fear is contagious, peaking with the scene where he builds himself a tent out of blankets and chairs to hide away from the ghostly apparitions. We see Cole cowering away in his hideaway, lit only by his trusty torch. His breath turns cold, signalling the arrival of a "dead person" and his torch goes out. He turns it back on to find a ghoulish girl inches from his face, vomit pouring from her mouth. "I'm sick!" she gurgles. Fucking right she is!

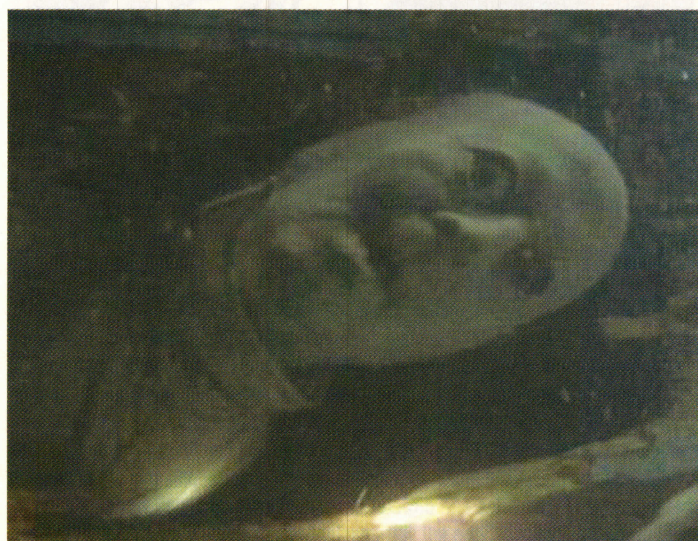
5. Bill of frights
The Silence Of The Lambs (1991)

Horrormeisters: Jodie Foster, Ted Levine
By the time we've seen what serial killer Buffalo Bill is capable of through the course of this nasty classic, we wouldn't wish him on our worst enemy. The fact that we've been rooting for FBI agent Clarice Starling throughout makes the sense of dread even more palpable as Buffalo Bill stalks her around his pitch-black home. Seen from his point of view through night vision goggles, the look of terror in Clarice's eyes is infectious, making this amongst the creepiest few minutes ever filmed.



4. "Here's Johnny!"
The Shining (1980)

Horrormeisters: Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall
Having lived in England for the better part of 20 years, Stanley Kubrick wasn't familiar with Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show*. So it was left to Jack Nicholson to improvise one of the movie's most pant-wetting introductions. Of course, it helped that Jack bellowed the line while hatcheting his way through a door to get to his hysterical wife. Some people reckon *The Shining's* boring. They clearly weren't talking about this scene when they came to that conclusion.



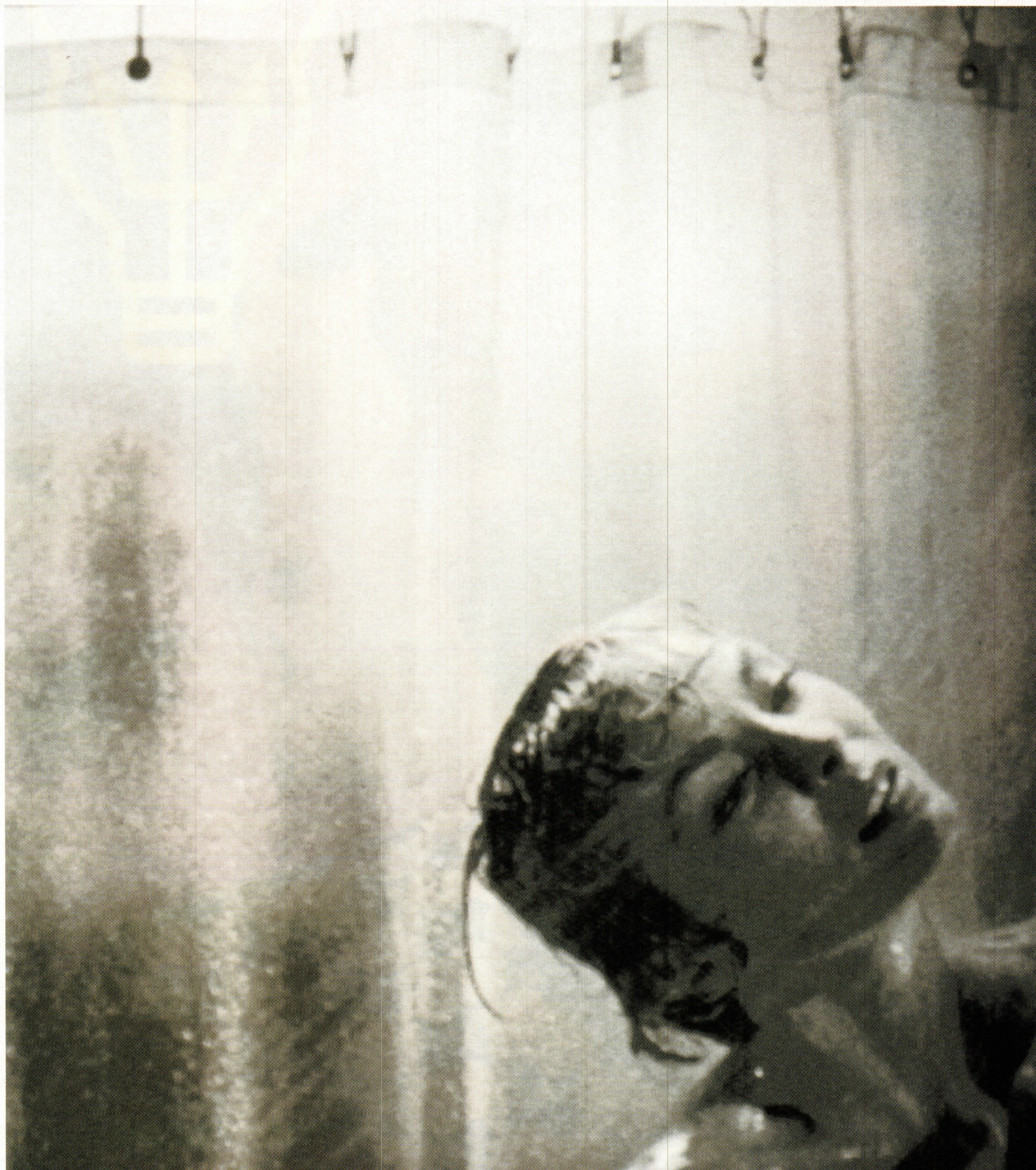
3. Getting ahead of yourself
Jaws (1975)

Horrormeister: Richard Dreyfuss
After a disappointing test screening, Steven Spielberg concluded that there weren't enough decent scares in *Jaws*. So off he went and reshot the scene where oceanographer Matt Hooper (Dreyfuss) is "surprised" when a human head falls through the bottom of a boat. When the sequence was tested again, it proved so petrifying that a man had a heart attack in the cinema. The fact that the restaged sequence was shot in the relatively cosy surroundings of Spielberg's backyard pool somehow only makes it even more frightening.

2. Fright test
The Thing (1982)

Horrormeisters: Kurt Russell, Donald Moffat, Keith David, Richard Masur, Thomas Waites, David Clennon.
Really frightening horror sequences don't just terrify you the once - they get you again and again and again. It's this rationale that secures John Carpenter's superb sci-fi remake this lofty a position on our survey. For no matter how familiar you are with the scene, it's impossible not to flinch the moment David Clennon's blood leaps out of the Petri dish, exposing him as the titular shape-shifting E.T. Of course, it isn't the film's most celebrated sequence - the cardiac arrest and subsequent spider-like transformation has the undisputed claim to that title. However, while *The Thing* is a testament to the talent of its fx supervisor Rob Bottin (only 22 at the time), it's greatest shock moment is a tribute to its director. Ask people about John Carpenter today and many will tell you he's a joke. Show them the blood test and they'll have the knowledge that he is in fact a genius to keep them company during their long sleepless nights.





1. **Red rain Psycho** (1960)

Horrormeisters: Janet Leigh, unknown extra

The blood was chocolate sauce, Janet Leigh has rarely taken a shower since and, if you believe the legend, Alfred Hitchcock wasn't even on-set the day it was filmed. Yes, it's *Psycho's* often sent-up, widely ripped-off, never-bettered shower sequence - over 40 years old and still scaring the pants off young and old alike.

While the scene almost certainly is the work of Hitch rather than titles designer Saul Bass, a significant figure who wasn't present the day film history was being made was none other than Norman Bates - Anthony Perkins was performing on Broadway, and so an extra had to don his wig and dress. Had Hitchcock had his way, there would also have been an absence of sound. Thankfully, composer Bernard Herrmann disobeyed the big man's instructions and scored the sequence anyway.

For many, it's said screaming violins that secures the shower scene its place in the annals of scare cinema history. For others, it's the frighteningly realistic sound of blade striking flesh (an effect achieved by repeatedly plunging a butcher's knife into a cantaloupe melon). And no doubt there are professors and psychiatrists the world over who attribute the sequence's ability to terrify to some sordid goings on in the unconscious mind.

Whatever the secret, it's reassuring to remember that there is one thing more frightening than the murder of Marion Crane. In London to see the movie, Aussie journo Clive James found the shower scene so scary that he rolled his polo-neck jumper over his eyes. This was of some comfort to him but it scared the shit out of the old lady sitting next to him when she quickly turned to her right.